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A PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

MAY I point out that Professor Ritchie [*cf.* January number, p. 252] has misunderstood and unconsciously misrepresented my views in treating me as an intuitionist? In the preface I state my position; idealistic evolutionism, with certain qualifications. When I assume the trustworthiness of the moral consciousness it is in no "extreme intuitionist sense." The words quoted by Professor Ritchie from p. 129 do *not* "reveal explicitly" my own point of view, but are a mere objective statement of intuitionism as a view held by others, and draw attention to one of its weaknesses, viz., that it offers no contribution towards a definition of the moral ideal. With this correction a whole page of disparaging comment falls to the ground—if I might not say, the whole critique. Take, for instance, the alleged incapacity of intuitionists for studying the origin of moral ideas. I am not concerned to defend the capacity of intuitionists for such a task. But there is no intuitionist here.

When I speak of intuitionism coming back in after days, I mean precisely what I say, "*intuitionism, i. e., a particular philosophy.*" Of course it is not "symmetrical in character" with religion, conscience, and philosophy. Hence it is marked off from the others: "*even intuitionism,*" I say, will come back. Its return will not be an unmixed blessing. Yet intuitionism will assert, in its sturdy if inadequate fashion, those primary moral truths which are being jostled aside at present by all kinds of appeals to biology, often the most foolish and shallow. In the chapter on Darwin and Miss Cobbe I state clearly this whole view of intuitionism as a right-hearted and wrong-headed creed. There also I deliberately repudiated the "old pulpit attitude" which Mr. Ritchie imputed to me. Did he read that chapter?

I should be sorry to misunderstand or misrepresent Professor Ritchie; but honestly I cannot think that I have done so. He appears to me to use such phrases as "natural selection" with intolerable breadth of signification. Where there is "no death of the unsuccessful, there is no real struggle *for existence*;" consequently, no elimination of the unfit—no *natural selection*. If language is used vaguely, it is hardly possible to keep one's thoughts self-consistent; and I believe Professor Ritchie has failed. My work makes at least the attempt to *define as exactly as possible* what natural selection is; where it can be supposed to work, where it cannot. Professor Ritchie seems not to sympathize with this—

perhaps not even to understand what I am about. He calls me a "minimizer." That is ultramontane language. What is it doing here? It is no compliment to the memory of Darwin, a modest and honorable gentleman, that we should shout "Great is natural selection," without defining our terms.

I hope those who are interested in the subject will not rely upon Professor Ritchie's misleading account of my book.

ROBERT MACKINTOSH.

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND.

BOOK REVIEWS.

A SHORT HISTORY OF FREETHOUGHT, Ancient and Modern. By John M. Robertson. London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd. 1899. Pp. xv., 447.

Those who are acquainted with Mr. Robertson's literary career will not need to be told that his most recent volume has been a labor of love. If the history of Freethought had to be written by a militant Freethinker, nobody had so good a claim to undertake the task. Mr. Augustine Birrell once divided freethinkers into "first class" and "second class," the former cultured and tolerant, the latter ignorant and zealous. This classification must be modified to include Mr. Robertson, who combines the learning of the one with the proselytizing zeal of the other.

A work of this character must be judged under two aspects, namely, its value as a storehouse of facts, and its importance as a contribution of thought. In regard to the first, the book deserves little but praise. Alone of English works, it presents a concise history of Freethought, in the amplest sense of the term, based on wide and well-selected reading. No two historians would, of course, agree on a list of men who should be included in a work with such a title; but the name of Kierkegaard seems the only notable omission. The chief value of the book consists, perhaps, in its recalling the achievements of men of the calibre of Sanchez, Knutzen, Peyrére, who, though not of first-rate importance, deserve to be remembered as pioneers. That the author has not always availed himself of the information recently accumulated in regard to several of the topics with which he deals may well be pardoned in view of the immense field which he has had to trav-